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**A
Teacher's Guide
To**

Wordsmith

A detailed black and white illustration of a quill pen, angled diagonally from the bottom left towards the top right. The quill has a long, slender shaft and a large, feathery vane with fine, radiating lines. The tip of the quill is positioned near the end of the subtitle text.

*A creative
writing course
for young people*

by
Janie B. Cheaney

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

WORDSMITH

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TEACHER'S GUIDE

TEACHER'S GUIDE TO *WORDSMITH*

WHAT THIS BOOK WILL NOT DO:

1. Teach comprehensive grammar--though the student won't be able to help learning some grammar.
2. Teach expository writing (reports, research papers, articles, etc.)--though the principles taught here will help with any kind of writing.
3. Produce an enthusiastic and prolific writer every time--but you may be surprised!

WHAT THIS BOOK WAS DESIGNED TO DO:

Creative writing, in the simplest terms, is literally **expressing oneself**: a person communicating what is in him to the world outside.

Why is this important? After all, most of the writing a child will have to do throughout his student career will be of the expository type: factual and objective. In an information age, the demand will increase for articulate writers who can communicate information clearly, without artistic frills or "creative" flourishes. So why bother with creative writing at all?

Expository writing is from the head; creative writing is from the heart. Actually, though, the distinction is not that neat. God created us to be integrated beings, and head and heart are to work together. The most memorable non-fiction is not dry, but charged with life and emotional appeal. The best fiction deals in concrete incident and detail, not vague flights of fancy. The major principles addressed in this book apply to both types of writing:

Use definitive nouns and verbs, descriptive modifiers.

Understand and use sentence structure to advantage.

Anchor your writing in concrete detail; don't generalize.

Creative writing is a good place to start learning these principles, because your child has all the materials he needs close at hand--language and experience. He will be starting where he is.

No one is born knowing how to write. Though some are gifted with exceptional literary talent, even the most naturally gifted young writer must learn the craft in order to write well. It's important to realize that writing is a **craft** before it rises to the level of an **art**. Art may be the purview of the gifted, but a craft is simply an acquired skill. Because all humans possess the tools--God's great gift of language--anybody can learn to express himself or herself in words.

Wordsmith is designed to help students sharpen their language skills, then put those skills to imaginative use. A motivated student could work through the book without much supervision, but it's a sad fact that many students are *not* motivated to write. Your son may be able to take apart his clock radio and put it back together so that it actually works better than it did before, but when faced with a blank page he can only despair of tomorrow. Your daughter may be a math whiz and a precocious reader, but constructing more than two paragraphs seems beyond her. Writing is simply hard work.

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Why should writing be any more difficult for your children than figuring areas or labeling flower diagrams? Why is it that they just can't seem to get started? My theory is that writing throws too wide a net. The problem, not just for children but for adults too, is not of scarcity but of glut. Rather than having too little to write about, we all have experienced more than any book could hold, and our language contains hundreds of thousands of words to express that experience. The purpose of this book is to help children pare this huge task down to a manageable size. The burden of learning falls mainly on them, but you, the teacher, have an important role to play as encourager, sounding board, critic and sometimes conscience ("Did you do your writing assignment for today?"). You may learn something, too!

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

Part One concentrates on word usage. Much of this is familiar ground to students who have studied grammar for the last several years, so I try to lead them away from the tried and true (often dull and imprecise) words with which young people can too easily carve a rut. Special emphasis is given to nouns and verbs as the "building blocks" of language, to choosing effective adjectives, to the proper use of adverbs, to the function of prepositions, and to the pronoun- antecedent relationship.

Part Two is concerned with sentences--strong vs. weak constructions, active and passive voice, and how to achieve sentence variety in a paragraph. This section in no way covers the subject of sentence construction, but is intended to introduce new possibilities inherent in it. The subject switching "formula" on page 28, for example, is a useful tool for breaking old patterns.

In **Part Three** the student tackles actual writing assignments, as opposed to the short paragraphs required in the earlier sections. This is where adult involvement is especially helpful, because few youngsters are apt to voluntarily do all the revision and rewriting necessary to produce their best work. Each division of Part Three contains some practice work, followed by at least two formal assignments. In general, the first of these assignments will be based on the student's personal experience; the last will require the transfer of that experience to an imaginary situation.

Reluctant writers are more the rule than the exception, but don't be surprised if an occasional project fires a child's imagination or engages his heart. Sometimes a simple device, like changing a point of view or revising an opening sentence, can open up new worlds to a young mind. This does happen--I've seen it happen in the most unliterary children.

If, by the end of the book, you still have a reluctant writer on your hands, bear in mind that not all of us are called to produce novels or stories or magazine articles. Almost certainly your child will have learned something about using written language, a basic and irreplaceable skill that seems to be eroding in our electronic age. My goal is to clear up some of the mystery and help students draw from the rich store of material that they carry with them and augment continually--their own experience.

But remember, practice is the key to learning almost anything. *Wordsmith* tries to teach some helpful pointers and guidelines, but your child won't become a writer just by working through the course. The only way to learn to write well is to do lots of writing. I hope this book will be only a start.

The course may be completed in three to nine months, depending on the student's age, aptitude, interest, and work load (his and yours). The following syllabus paces the work

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through one 36-week school year, with at least a little practice every day (Fridays usually excepted). Student assignments are boxed. All suggestions are merely that--you may copy them as is into your schedule book or adapt them to fit your needs.

NOTE: Throughout this Guide I use "he" as a generic pronoun, simply because it's easier and more resonant than the awkward compounds he/she or himself/herself. Style won out over social conscience.

ABOUT REVISION

Revision is an inexact science; most writers end up trusting their instincts as to what "sounds" good to them. Experienced instincts can often be trusted, but a beginner needs some guidance in making intelligent choices--a responsibility which will likely fall to you. Don't be surprised if your own beginner resents the intrusion. "I have to say it my own way," is the usual line, and the more serious your young writer is about his work, the more sincere his protest will be. The argument is that no one can tell a unique individual how best to express himself. While it's true that every writer must develop his own style, that development does not occur entirely within the feverish workings of his own imagination.

Tell your budding young artist that **every** writer, even--(name a favorite author here)--has to subject his or her work to criticism and is wise enough to apply good suggestions. You may not consider yourself a good judge of literature, but you've read more than your child and probably have better instincts than you think. In these first months, you as teacher will play a large role in the revision process, but by the end of the course the student should be taking more of that responsibility on himself. If he doesn't like your "interference," reassure him that greater artistic freedom will be his down the road, as long as he uses certain basic, proven and time-honored principles.

HOW TO REVISE:

The easiest approach is to read the paper first for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, mark them with the dreaded red ink, and require the student to correct them before going further. I'll admit, I've recommended this because it gives the teacher some confidence that she knows what she's doing. But perhaps the child's confidence is more important. I firmly believe that the rules should be followed and mechanics are important, but the first goal of this course is to get the kid to write. Too much red ink on a paper can knock the wind out of him before he's even made a start!

So concentrate on content first. This involves how well the student expressed his thoughts, how those thoughts were arranged, where the impact seems weaker than it should have been, where another choice of words, more detail, or a direct quote might have helped. Be careful to compliment every small step forward, every attempt at improvement. Stress the positives first and watch that little word, "But--" After you've used it once or twice your student will be expecting it to fall like the proverbial ax. Try another approach every now and then, such as, "Let's see what happens if we put this sentence at the beginning," or, "This is a good description! What can you add to it?" Asking a young author what he likes best about the piece can be instructive for both of you. Evaluating the content of a paper takes much thought and, probably, more than one reading. The good news is that your editing skills will improve with the writing skills of your student.

Speaking of editing, several symbols are standard in the publishing industry and in the schools. You might as well learn and use them, if you don't already:

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-  Delete word or short phrase
-  Delete longer phrase or sentence
-  Delete or change circled punctuation
-  Start new paragraph
-  Reverse letter or word order

Once the paper is edited and corrected to the satisfaction of both the teacher and the writer, it's time to make a final copy, neat and single-spaced. Now is the time to correct the technical errors: misspelled words should go on a list; persistent grammatical errors can become the subject of a short language arts lesson. Occasionally, an assignment should be typed. Typing just *looks* different from script, and it can give a student a fresh and startling view of his own work. Typing is one of the most useful skills your child will ever learn--an almost indispensable skill in our increasingly computer-oriented world. If you don't have a typewriter, you might look into buying one, especially if your child is college-bound. These days, small electric models are relatively inexpensive.

A computer or word processor, of course, makes the revision process much easier by eliminating the tedious copy work. Computer prices have come down quite a bit within the last five years. Many workable models, whose only fault is that of outliving the technology, are available second-hand at reasonable prices. If even a second-hand machine is out of the question for your family, don't worry; your child can learn to write quite well without one. Remember that most of the world's great literature was written before computers were even imagined. It's not hardware but heart that counts.

SUGGESTED PLAN OF STUDY FOR WORDSMITH - 36 WEEKS

It's a good idea to keep all Wordsmith writing assignments together as long as you continue this course. Invest either in a three-ring binder or an inexpensive portfolio with pockets. This will make it easier to check assignments against guidelines in the book, or compare current assignments with previous ones, or rewrite pieces written weeks earlier.

WEEK 1

Monday

Read and be ready to discuss the introduction on pp. i-ii.

If you have a print of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, perhaps in a history text, it may be helpful to look at it together and pay close attention to the composition. Notice how the line and light emphasize the figure of Washington, and speculate on what the effect might have been if the artist had highlighted some other part of the picture and left Washington in the shadows. The point of this illustration is to open the student's mind to some of the possibilities of creative writing. He doesn't have to just get something on paper--words may be *chosen* to build to a climax, make a point, provoke a thought or a laugh. There are at least as

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many dimensions to writing as there are to painting, and literature can be as "pictorial" as visual art.

Assign a paper to be finished this week: ask the student to write approximately two pages ("Two pages! Aw, Mom!") on "What I Did Last Summer." This topic is almost guaranteed to produce a boring paper, and that's exactly what is intended. We'll use it as a "control piece" for later comparison. Be sure he leaves wide margins for later corrections.

If summer is too far away, assign another topic equally broad, such as, "Our School," or "My Sports Experiences." Give no guidelines and, when the assignment is completed, make no corrections other than spelling and grammatical errors. Keep this paper in the creative writing folder. By the time he's finished the course, your child should be favorably impressed with the progress he's made.

Thursday

Read pages 1-3 and complete Exercise 1-A.

WEEK 2. Since this book is designed for students no younger than age 10, there should be no confusion about what nouns are. The goal in this section is to emphasize the use of specific, concrete nouns over general ones.

Monday

Discuss the material on pages 1-3 to make sure he understands it, then go over his list of nouns. If he was not able to come up with at least five for every general noun, do some brainstorming together, and list as many as you can think of until you run out of room. Then look at the example for Exercise 1-B on page 4 and point out how dramatically a concrete noun can change the meaning. If he seems uncertain of what to do, collaborate on writing three versions of sentence #1.

NOTE: It may be necessary to explain what "concrete" means in this context--not the same stuff of sidewalks and swimming pools, but "concrete" in the sense of being definite, solid.

Finish Exercise 1-B, pp. 4-6.

Tuesday

Read through his sentences together. Did he choose specific nouns to replace the general ones? Does the subsequent action follow logically from the changes he made? It may be interesting to choose one of the sentences and develop a little plot from each variation.

Look at Exercise 1-C together and notice the examples. It wouldn't hurt to limit our use of these two words in speaking as well as writing. I'm especially lazy about the word "people," and have recently made an effort to substitute "Americans," "senior citizens," or "pseudo-democratic liberals" as the situation demands. Fuzzy language means fuzzy thinking!

Finish exercise 1-C, pp. 6-7.

Wednesday

Here are some appropriate substitute nouns for the sentences in Exercise C:

1. of his teachings, wise words, stories
2. children, of my friends, grownups, Americans
3. youth pastor, teenager, octogenarian

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4. art objects, hobby and craft supplies, books (or all these)
5. crustacean, spider, little brother
6. packing crates, toys, ropes and extension cords
7. (You could have a lot of fun with this one.)

Sometimes the object in question is so broad that only "thing" or "person" will cover it. "In him [Christ] all things hold together" (Col. 1:17) is an example that comes readily to mind. You can't get more inclusive than that! I'm merely suggesting that these words should not be used without some thought.

Talk over the room description assignment on page 7. This should be double-spaced, as all the assignments should be. Make it clear that the paragraph will be re-copied after corrections are made. Once you are sure he understands the assignment, be available to answer questions about the furniture and decor in your living room.

Write a paragraph describing your living room as defined in Exercise 1-D on p. 7.

Thursday

Now for the revision. (Read "About Revision" on p. 3 of this guide to fortify yourself for the task.) Ask the student to read the description aloud, correcting any spelling or punctuation errors as he spots them. Then go through the paragraph together and circle every noun. Look at each one to see if any could be made more concrete. Certainly a "white wall" is more specific than a "wall," but concentrate on nouns, not adjectives. "Paneling" or "brickwork" might do for "wall," if either applies. Before changing *all* the nouns, read the "Caveat" on page 7 and discuss which general nouns, if any, might remain in the paragraph--or where a general noun might even be better.

By now the spaces between the written lines should have some corrections in them--especially if you caught some spelling errors that your child missed. If you feel you've mauled the nouns enough, and both of you are satisfied with the result, ask for a neat copy, with all corrections made. Usually the final copy is to be single-spaced, but this once ask the student to double-space again. The reason is that we'll be making further corrections when we get into sentences.

Be sure to keep all final copies of these assignments in the *Wordsmith* binder.

WEEK 3. The importance of building a good vocabulary of nouns and verbs can't be overemphasized. This week we focus on verbs.

Monday

Read pp. 8-9 and complete exercise 2-A.

Tuesday

Discuss the word choices the student made yesterday and comment on the verbs you especially like. Then read directions and example for Exercise 2-B on p. 9. Once he fully understands the exercise, give him the following assignment:

Finish exercise 2-B on p. 9. Then read page 10

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Wednesday

Discuss the three sentences about Jenna on page 10. The point should be obvious, but make sure the student sees how much work a well-chosen verb can do. Exercise 2-C on p. 10 can be a joint project; once you've chosen verbs that show how satisfied Sally is, choose another set to show her as angry, or excited. Refer to the verb list in the appendix for help, and, if you have a thesaurus, get it out and demonstrate how to use it. (Sometimes a thesaurus is not as helpful as I thought it would be--that's why I compiled the verb list.)

Rewrite the three paragraphs in Exercise 2-D on p. 11 to show a definite mood in the characters portrayed.

Thursday

It might be fun for you to rewrite your own versions of the three paragraphs (or just make a list of verbs for each one). Let the student read his versions, then you read yours, and guess what emotion is expressed in each case. For example:

Ivan stalked across the street. "Did you see that van?" he demanded (anger, indignation)

Other possibilities:

1. darted, gulped (surprise), or scurried, stuttered (anxiety)
2. eased, whispered, glided, rested (awe)
grabbed, snapped, strode, slammed (anger)
3. tiptoed, peered, faltered (nervousness)
strutted, glared, barked (indignation)

The final paragraph about verbs on page 11 reassures the student that he needn't swear off neutral verbs altogether.

As you and your student discover interesting verbs in your reading, try to make a mental note of them and add them to the list on p. 87. This is a great way to "cultivate that garden."

The section on adverbs is actually a supplement to verbs, since the idea of concentrating on strong, high-energy verbs is reinforced. The main point I want to stress about adverbs is not to use too many, especially of the "-ly" type. That's one sure mark of the overeager writing student.

Read p. 12 and do your best to think of verbs that can be substituted for the verb-adverb combinations in the exercise. For help, check the verb list.

COMING UP: Next Thursday, the student will be asked to write a restaurant review, and it would be helpful to have one on hand for him to look at. If possible, cut one out of Friday's paper or make a photocopy at the library (regional or city magazines often carry restaurant reviews).

WEEK 4. This week we'll be talking about modifiers-- adjectives and adverbs. Make sure you understand what "modify" means!

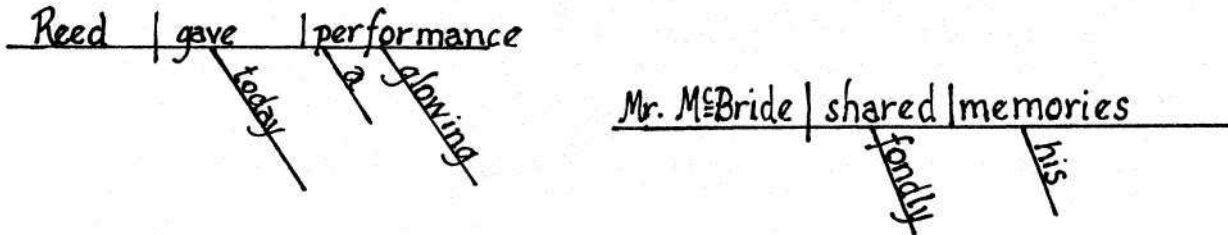
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Monday

If the student left a lot of blanks in the exercise on p. 12, you can go over the verb list on p. 87 with him. There *will* be at least one appropriate verb for each example, I promise.

I believe that no exercise can help students understand parts of speech better than sentence diagramming. You may have hated diagramming in school, and I'll admit that some teachers carried it to extremes, but a picture (in this case, diagram) is worth a thousand words of explanation. To check your child's understanding of the function and place of adverbs, ask him to diagram these sentences:

Reed gave a glowing performance today.
Fondly, Mr. McBride shared his memories.



In any sentence diagram, locate the subject and the verb first, then decide what the modifiers are and where they go. Any word that tells when, where, how or how much is an adverb, and is usually placed below the verb. I said *usually*, because adverbs can also modify adjectives or other adverbs.

Vernon walked very softly to the door. (modifies an adv.)

Margo was wearing this, like, totally awesome denim jacket.
(modifies an adj.)

If this is not getting through to your student, try to find some adverbs in a book or magazine article that he's reading. You don't have to diagram the sentences, but note whether the adverb tells when, where, etc.

Read pp. 13-14 and complete exercise 4-A.

If you have a rather unobservant student, make sure he notices the "list of adjectives to choose from" at the end of exercise 4-A.

Tuesday

Review exercise 4-A with the student and be sure to compliment any adjectives he included that were not on the list. Together, each of you might try to come up with one more original adjective that would be appropriate in each case--you have hundreds to choose from!

Now look at the paragraph about camp on p. 14. All of the underlined words are merely variations of the word "good" and say nothing particular about the nouns they modify. Ask your child which paragraph he prefers and don't be surprised if he says he likes the first one better. This is the way a youngster might speak if asked to describe a memorable experience. "It was, like, really *awesome*, you know?" Point out again that it's okay to talk that way, but writing must be more precise. Many children will have to be reminded of this principle over and over.

The next exercise is designed to help a young writer distinguish *qualities* of nouns. For some this may be difficult. Ask what it is that makes a story "beautiful," and help him come up with a more descriptive adjective, such as "moving," "tender," "uplifting," etc. Have a thesaurus handy.

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Finish Exercise 4-B on pp. 14-15.

Wednesday

Read the rest of page 15 together and make sure you both understand what I'm talking about, then have the student fill in the synonyms required by Exercise 4-C. You should be available to help, if necessary. Some suggested synonyms are:

sad: gloomy, depressed, grief-stricken, moody, distressed
mean: cruel, petty, vindictive, unkind, ruthless
excited: titillated, thrilled, ecstatic, fired-up, enthralled
fearful: cautious, nervous, anxious, frightened, terrified

Look over Exercise 4-D and make sure he understands how to do it.

Finish the sentences in exercise 4-D, pp. 16-17.

Thursday

Check the work on Exercise 4-D. Does the quote in each case make sense with the adjective? Be encouraging and praise any combinations that seem especially apt or striking to you. In this type of exercise, no word choice is *wrong*, unless it's misspelled, but remember to strive for clarity in writing--the more precise, the better.

Now note the two caveats on p. 17. Most children err on the side of too few descriptive words rather than too many, but the warning is included here lest they conclude that more adjectives make better writing. One mark of a novice writer is loading up his prose with adjectives and adverbs in the mistaken assumption that these make his writing more "descriptive." Some best-selling authors suffer from the same delusion. All this accomplishes, in my view, is to suffocate the reader.

The second warning boils down to this again: spoken language is often imprecise, but written language should never be. Words such as "weird", "gross" and "awesome" have taken on too broad a meaning to be of much use in writing. If your student still has trouble understanding why the use of colloquials is unwise, just tell them it's because I said so.

Finally, discuss the restaurant review assignment on p. 17. If you have a copy of a review on hand, the student can underline all the adjectives in it. Did you ever realize how many adjectives we can use to describe food? (I've heard it said that one can always judge what a society deems important by the number of words available to describe it.) If time and interest permits, make a list of adjectives that may be used to describe different types of food--crunchy, savory, salty, spicy, creamy, crisp, pungent, tangy, etc. Decide if you're going out to eat or dining at home, and make sure the review is finished over the weekend.

Write a restaurant review as outlined in Ex. 4-E, p. 17.

WEEK 5

Monday

Ask your child to read his review aloud, marking any corrections that may have been missed in the first proofreading. Both of you may notice that many of the sentences start the same way: "The service was . . ." "The atmosphere was . . ." This is a problem, but we'll address it later; for now concentrate on the adjectives. If it seems to you that they could be

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better, get out the thesaurus and look up synonymns. When both of you are reasonably satisfied with the word choices, and all corrections have been made, put the review aside for a few days.

Read the section on prepositions, pp. 18-19. Rewrite the sentences in Exercise 5-A, pp. 19-20.

Tuesday

Read the rewritten sentences to make sure the student understands what prepositions are and how they work.

Write one original sentence for each of the six prepositional phrases listed in Exercise 5-B, p. 20. Then rewrite each sentence once as directed.

Wednesday

Read the student's original sentences and compliment his work. Now, take out that restaurant review and read it one more time. Do you see any prepositional phrases that could be moved around for variety's sake, or could such a phrase be added at the beginning of a sentence? Avoid such relatively meaningless phrases as "all in all," "in the long run," "overall," etc., but consider where a prepositional phrase might actually help clarify a statement as well as add variety. Try to add at least two prepositional phrases to the review.

Make a neat, single-spaced copy of your revised restaurant review, and proofread. Read pp. 21-22.

Thursday

Discuss the previous day's reading and make sure the student understands what an antecedent is. Read over the corrections of the "pillow fight" story and note the many different ways I used to identify the antecedent. Unclear antecedents are a problem that pops up even in the writing of professional authors, and it's not always easily solved. A writer may even have to resort to the blatantly obvious, as in: Ron was jealous of Paul because of his (Paul's) many successes." My purpose in this section is to make the student aware of the problem and suggest a few solutions.

Correct the paragraph in Exercise 6 on p. 22 to make the antecedents clear. Corrections may be written between the lines or in the margins; you don't have to rewrite.

WEEK 6. Depending on your child's progress, this might be a good time to stop and review.

Monday

Re-read pp. 1-11.

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Tuesday

Take out the assignment you wrote five weeks ago about your summer. Read it over carefully, paying particular attention to the nouns and verbs you used. Mark at least two nouns and two verbs that could be made more specific or vigorous.

Wednesday

Re-read pp. 11-23.

Thursday

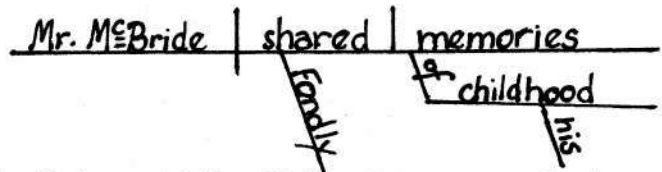
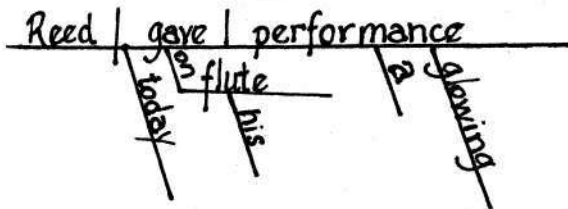
Talk over the composition with the student and suggest any other general nouns that might be made more concrete or weak verbs that could be made stronger. Now, what adjectives did he use? Does "good" or "great" or "wonderful" appear more than once? How could he define these qualities better? Where could adjectives be added to make a noun more concrete? Mark the words that could stand some improvement, then write the suggested improvements in the margins.

Take a few moments to review prepositions and their function. If the student can't tell you what the function is, ask him to look it up in the section on prepositions. The purpose, for your eyes only, is to turn a noun into a modifier, and the way they are diagrammed depends on whether they modify a noun or a verb.

Try these sentences again:

Reed gave a glowing performance today on his flute.

Fondly, Mr. McBride shared memories of his childhood.



On his flute is an adverb because it tells *how*. **Of his childhood**, however, tells what kind of **memories** Mr. McBride is sharing, so it serves as an adjective.

If this is confusing to your child, or to you, let me reassure you that I don't believe you have to master all the grammatical concepts in order to become a good writer. But some notion of sentence structure is necessary for effective writing. If the student has a good grasp of these concepts already, you may of course skip the whole diagramming practice and go on to the next page.

Read your composition one more time and review your word choices. Are there any more you would like to change? Is there any misunderstanding about what or to whom your pronouns refer? Mark any further changes you would like to make and keep the composition.

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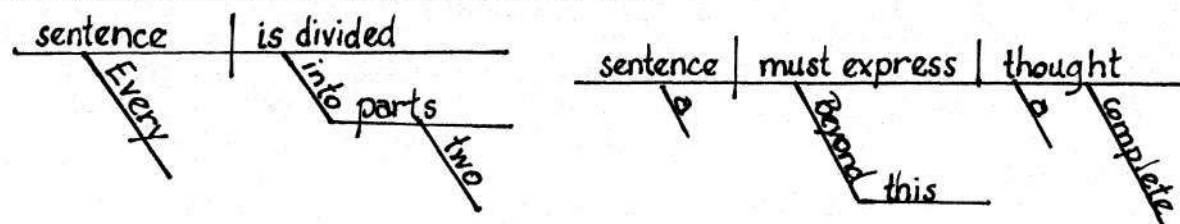
WEEK 7. I approach this section with fear and trembling because sentence construction is a vast and complicated subject. Introducing the basic principles without dragging down in rules of style and grammar turned out to be a formidable task, but an essential one. Sentence structure is very likely the most important element of good writing.

Monday

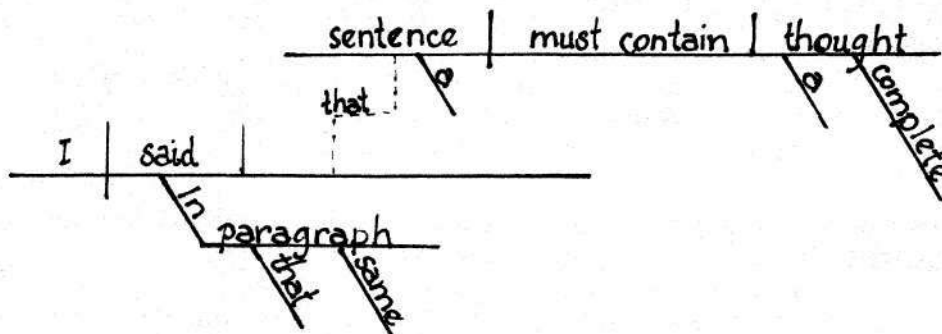
Read and study pp. 24-25. Be sure to underline the subject and circle the verb in each sentence in the first paragraph on p. 25.

Tuesday

Discuss the reading from yesterday. Some 7th-9th graders grasp the principles of sentence construction easily. A surprising number of junior high students, however, lack a basic understanding of how sentences are built. For their sake, section 1 is included. It's important to be sure your student understands this material before proceeding, so take some time to discuss it with him. If he had trouble locating the subjects and verbs in the first paragraph, drawing some diagrams might be helpful:



We all speak in complex sentence patterns every day. The first sentence in the fifth paragraph on page 25 seems straightforward and simple, but could you diagram it? If they serve no other purpose, diagrams show that sentence building is a complicated subject.



(If your student sometimes doubts your qualifications as a teacher of English, you may wish to draw this diagram for him and awe him into silence for a few blessed seconds.)

Fragments are common errors, and by now most students should have little trouble recognizing them. Many students still use them, however. Those who make a habit of writing with sentence fragments may justify them as a matter of style. That's why the paragraphs at the bottom of p. 25 and top of p. 26 are worth reading again. If this restriction presents a problem to your free-spirited author, point out that fragments are like the special tools an artist or mechanic can use *only* after he's mastered the basic techniques. And even then, they are to be used sparingly.

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Read p. 26-27 and complete Exercise 2-A. Then rewrite the description of your living room according to Exercise 2-B.

Wednesday

The subjects and verbs of the room description in exercise A should be identified as follows: 1) room/has; 2) It/has; 3) I/have; 4) room/has; 5) dresser/is; 6) I/like. Go over each sentence of the room description on p. 26-27 and note how the sentences were improved.

Now read the revised living room description and compliment any improvements. (Almost any time an "It has" or "There is" structure is changed, it's an improvement.) Make any obvious corrections, but don't do a thorough revision yet. If the rewrite was difficult, explain that the transformation techniques we'll look at today should make the job easier. Read the material on pp. 28-29 together, and if the transforming idea seems difficult to grasp, help with rewriting the first sentences in Exercises 2-B and 2-C.

Complete exercises 2-C and 2-D on pp. 28 and 29.

Thursday

Check the student's work and make any helpful suggestions. Here are some possible sentence rewrites--of course, you understand that many other possibilities exist.

- C
1. A four-poster bed fills (or dominates) one corner of my room.
 2. Four windows let insufficient light into the house.
 3. A huge oak tree shades our back yard.
 4. A large library stands in the middle of Howardsville.
 5. A steep slide gets constant use at the Pride Park swimming pool.
- D
1. A fountain splashes noisily in the park.
 2. Two children complete the family.
 3. A hat with an ostrich plume sat on the shelf.
 4. A giant named Goliath strutted among the Philistines.
 5. Three office buildings stand at Main and Strather.

I should reiterate the point that there is nothing incorrect about starting a sentence with the word "there." Alert readers will discover several clauses or sentences beginning with "there" throughout this book--one of them is in this paragraph! But avoiding "there is" for the duration of the course is like swearing off candy bars while training for the Olympics. The only thing seriously wrong with candy bars is the eater's overindulgence, and certain word patterns can be overindulged as well. Avoiding them for a season is merely a disciplinary measure.

I've found "The Formula" to be a useful tool for encouraging children to break settled habits of sentence formation. But be aware that its use is not absolutely guaranteed to produce the best sentences every time. Only practice will give the writer a "feel" for using various sentence patterns effectively.

In your summer vacation composition, find two sentences that could be transformed according to "the Formula." Write the revised sentences on another page.

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WEEK 8.

Monday

Read the sentences your student "transformed" last week. If he's getting sick and tired of this summer vacation story, counsel just a little more patience. It will pay off.

If possible, locate a short passage, in a book or magazine, that contains both active and passive sentences. After reading about verb "voice" on pp. 30-31, ask the student to locate the **passive** sentences in the book passage. If he has trouble distinguishing between active and passive, he may need some help with the sentence transformations in exercise 2-E.

Look at sentence #1 together. This is a passive sentence. An attempt to transform it to active will quickly reveal that the transformer must invent a subject; the sentence as it is does not supply one. Here's an obvious rewrite: **The audience wildly applauded the symphony's performance.** Warn your student that he may have to invent a few more subjects in the course of the exercise.

Reread the section on active-passive sentence transformations (p. 30) and complete Exercise 2-E on pp. 30-31.

Tuesday

If the student followed all the directions in Exercise 2-E, some words in each preferred sentence should be circled. I asked if he could detect a pattern, and this is it: in most cases, the subject is the word or group of words which seem to be the most "important." Writing is typically more forceful when the "wallop" is reserved for the end, but it's important for the reader to understand early on what the sentence is about. That's why the subject carries so much weight.

The rewritten sentences should read like this:

2. The race was finally finished by Randy.
3. The mail is delivered later on Saturdays.
4. E. A. Poe wrote "The Gold Bug."
5. The volcano killed many island natives.
6. (You know this one!)
7. We often sweep our "little" faults under the rug.
8. These are the times that try men's souls.
9. A wise author is praised by his own works.
10. All babies are loved by Susan.

Together, read the active-passive comparisons at the top of page 31. Do you agree with my judgment about which version is preferable? Discuss why or why not. If his understanding of verb voice seems a little shaky, try to find some more examples of active and passive in a story or textbook that he's reading.

Rewrite the paragraph in exercise 2-F, p. 32 to make it more interesting.

Wednesday

The rewritten paragraph should demonstrate if the student has a firm grasp on sentence transformations. Ask him to read it out loud and evaluate his work: Is "has" or "have" used more than once? What happened to all the "It has" or "There is" sentences? What's the most colorful verb he used? For what it may be worth, here's my version:

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Red and gold, in the walls and on my Chinese silk bedspread, give my room a dramatic flair. My bed hangs from the ceiling on golden chains. Under the bed, a trap door opens to a heated pool in the basement. A non-alcoholic wet bar and an entertainment system contribute to an ideal place to relax with friends. To the east, big glass doors open onto the balcony. My room is my castle.

For the rest of the week, the topic will be connecting and combining sentences. It's important to understand the distinction.

Connecting is simply joining one sentence to another, related sentence, either with a connecting word or with the proper punctuation. **Combining** is more difficult--it involves grafting part of one sentence into another, usually with some degree of revision. The next few pages may seem rather technical, and a student who is not especially well-versed in English grammar will probably need help. Read over the material yourself to make sure you understand it, then be prepared to answer questions.

Read pp.33 through the top of p. 34. Then take out your summer story and find two sentence connections you could make.

Thursday

We will be covering a lot of material rather quickly here, so make sure the student comprehends it all. Conjunctions may seem confusing, but that's probably because of the long, bulky names we have to use for such puny little words. The principle itself is simple. If necessary, demonstrate how a **coordinating conjunction** may be removed, and the two resulting sentences are able to "stand alone" (as complete sentences). This is not true of **subordinate conjunctions**, as we will see.

A common mistake in punctuation is trying to join two complete sentences with a comma. I see this in magazines, newspapers and even home school newsletters, so it's worth some extra emphasis. Don't do it!

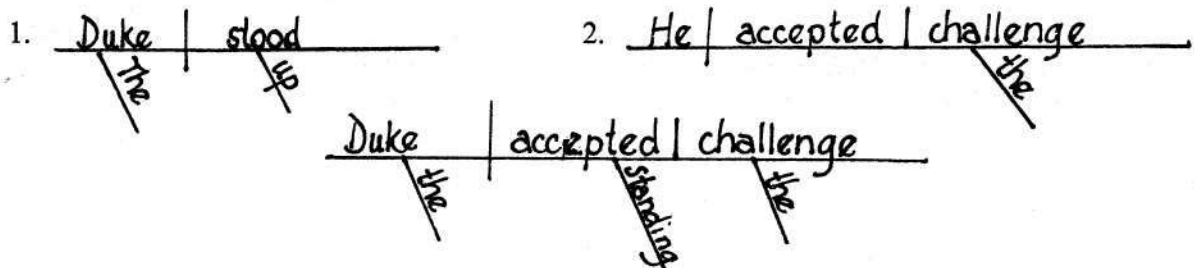
Read pp. 34-36 and note with a question mark (?) anything you don't understand.

WEEK 9

Monday

Relative pronouns, participals and participial phrases are introduced in Section 4. By the age of ten most of us will have used these in everyday speech without the slightest idea what they are. I tried to explain as clearly as possible, but some students will need to read the material more than once.

The whimsical illustration of "performing surgery" on one of the sentences may confuse more than it helps, if your youngster is rather literal-minded. Explain, if need be, that this is a word picture to help him understand what's going on (more on metaphors later in the book). A similar illustration is the "altered wedding dress." It may be helpful to diagram the examples given:



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The diagrams illustrate how the verb in Sentence One is changed to become a modifier for the verb in Sentence Two.

When participals are placed too far from the words they modify, they are said to "dangle." That's the problem with the two sentences at the bottom of p. 35. Be sure to tell your student; he'll be delighted to know what a dangling participle is.

Reread pp. 34-35, then do two rewrites of sentences #1-5, pp. 36-37.

Tuesday

Write two versions of sentences #6-10 in Exercise 4-A, pp. 37-38

Wednesday

Check the rewritten sentences and make sure the student knows the difference between combinations and connectors.

Together, read the paragraph beginning, "Although we've done a lot of connecting work . . ." on p. 38. This is an important point. A beginning writer should know that short sentences are fine, but they should be used for a purpose. As a writer begins to perceive how words and sentences can be arranged for effect, he's on his way to developing, half-unconsciously, the special patterns and peculiarities of language expression known as style. The average twelve-year-old has no perception of style as such, but when he decides for one word or phrase over another, trades a long sentence for two short ones or vice versa, moves the quotation from the end to the beginning of the paragraph, he's making style decisions.

As preparation for the next assignment, read the ad copy together, and ask your child to underline the four sentence fragments. **They are: Comfort; Serenity; A unique retirement . . . ; A relaxed, informal lifestyle . . .**

Rewrite the ad in Exercise 4-B, p. 39.

Wednesday

If you have any magazines around the house, try to find an ad with sentence fragments, similar to the one on p. 39 (it shouldn't be too difficult). Read the ad the student rewrote yesterday, and discuss whether his version or the original version is more effective for *advertising*. Which do you think makes for better literature? Why do you suppose many ads are written this way? Do you think the choppy style is overdone? (I'm not giving any right or wrong answers here; you two decide.)

Rewrite the paragraph in Exercise 4-C, p. 39, breaking up some of the long sentences into shorter ones.

Thursday

Read the rewritten paragraph together and note the sentences that were changed. Ask the student to explain *why* he shortened these particular sentences; he should have a reason other than, "It sounds better." *Why* does it sound better? Is this where he thinks the reader should sit up and take notice? Does the action call for a break here?

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Review some of the rewritten sentences from pp. 36-38 and ask the student to identify some participial phrases, relative clauses and sentence connectors for you. Turn a few pages farther back and review active-passive transformations and the "super sentence" formula.

WEEK 10

Monday

Variety is the spice of good writing, but even variety is not everything. Some of the greatest prose ever written has depended on *similarity* for its effectiveness. If you think your student will be interested, call his attention to these passages:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled

(Matthew 5:3-7)

. . . We shall fight on the beaches; we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets; we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender

(Winston Churchill)

Are these passages truly effective and memorable (you'd better decide that they are)? What makes them effective and memorable? Obviously, repetition--but we've spent half our work on sentences exploring ways to avoid repetition!

By now, the student should be catching on to the fact that--while he must obey rules of spelling and grammar--there are almost no hard and fast rules of writing style. That is why no one can learn to write well by studying a book--the only way to learn is to *do* it. Practice will teach him, much better than you or I could, when to break up sentences, when to bring the reader up short, when to repeat, when to quit.

For the rest of the week, work on rewriting the paragraphs on p. 40. Use everything you've learned about nouns and verbs, modifiers, prepositions and sentence constructions.

WEEK 11. We've worked on mechanics; now for content. The student has been learning to use some tools of the trade, applying them mostly to impersonal, textbook exercises. Soon he will begin to apply these tools to his own thought and experience. Parts One and Two dealt with mechanics and technique. Part Three delves into perception and emotion.

Until now you've been a close supervisor of your child's work, a step-by-step guide as he progressed from words to sentences. Your goal from now on should be to let go of his hand gradually as he works his way through the rest of the book. By that time, a teenager should be able to do his own thinking, selecting, drafting and correcting down to the final revision. This is *not* to say that I guarantee a polished young prose stylist. Chances are his writing will be quite uneven--it may take off and soar in some spots but crash land in others. All I hope to do (and all you, as a parent, *can* do) is provide some coaching, practical tips and applicable skills. Good writing ultimately depends on the writer himself, and no one else.

Monday

Compare the rewritten paragraphs from last week with the examples below. Point out that my versions do not constitute the one "right" way to do it; each of them only offers one of many variations. If your student made all the indicated changes in one way or another, he's very observant and a fast learner. If not, he's typical.

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*opened sentence w/
prep. phrase or relative
clause*

After the game, we went to Pizza Haven, which was packed with noisy party-goers. The whole room blared with talk and laughter and electronic beeps from the arcade games. After ordering our favorite anchovy and Canadian bacon pizza, we buzzed over to the games. I was high scorer for that day on "Galactic Destroyers." When our number was called, Todd and I went to fetch our pizza at the window. After we ate, Mr. Jensen allowed us ten more minutes for games. Until somebody's little brother put his elbow in my eye, I had a great time.

concrete nouns

strong verb

more detail

sentence connect.

The day was warm and fresh-smelling. Tulips and daffodils bloomed along the sidewalk where we strolled, and children ran and shouted in the park while their mothers lounged on park benches. A little girl on her bike was speeding toward us. She didn't know how to ride very well. "Look out," Dad gasped, but it was too late. The bicycle bumped the jogger in front of us and knocked him down.

descriptive adj.

nouns

better verb

Read p. 42 and be ready to talk about it tomorrow.

Tuesday

If you like the Emily Dickinson poem you may wish to look up a volume of her poetry at the library. The point here is that she was able to accomplish so much with a single thought. We can imagine her sitting at her window one winter day, wrapped in a blanket and sipping a cup of tea. Out of that simple experience--with the help of a snowflake, a wind, a bank of low clouds--came a poem. While it's true that most people, especially young people, don't have the depth of perception needed to turn ordinary events into literary masterpieces, a beginning writer must understand that he has plenty to write about. That well-worn excuse "But I never *do* anything," just won't wash. Every child does plenty, every day. The trick is to learn to *look* at those everyday experiences.

Discuss p. 42 with your child and try to assess his feelings. These ideas may spark the interest of a few children, who will then be eager to try. The majority may be slightly encouraged, but still not wildly excited about writing. And there will always be some who say, in effect, "I don't like this, and you can't *make* me like it." Those skeptical few should be encouraged to hang in there for the next several pages and give it their best anyway--they may be pleasantly surprised.

With that, turn the page. Eager beavers may read and complete the Christmas poem on their own, but the foot-draggers may benefit from a little push. If this is the case, read through the material together and make sure he understands what to do before turning him loose to do it. He will be required to write two poems on the given model. It would be helpful and instructive for you or other family members to write a poem on Christmas or your favorite season. Using the model, it's not difficult--try it! (If you are somewhat artistic, why not design a Christmas card with the poem printed inside?)

Read p. 43 and write a poem following the instructions under 1-A.

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Wednesday-Friday

Ask the student to read his poems aloud and comment on at least two lines that appeal to you. If you wrote a poem, read it now and let him tell *you* what he likes about it. If you both write poems about the same season, it would be interesting to compare the aspects of the season that affect each of you. If some lines in the poetry seem weak (i.e., vague or uncertain), work together on making them stronger--which nearly always means making them sharper, more specific.

In my experience, most young writers are intrigued by poetry once they've actually written a poem; some are even excited by it. I would encourage them to go ahead and write a "collection" of seasons as suggested in 1-B, p. 44. If combining them in a booklet with illustrations seems rather "uncool" to your teenager, you may have an artistically-inclined younger child who would like to do a set of illustrations. If a desired media, such as oil pastels, makes book-making impractical, the pictures may be mounted on a wall or tacked on a bulletin board with the accompanying poem. Use your judgment--if your child is even halfway willing, take the rest of the week to work on the poems. If, on the other hand, he shows no interest whatever, it may be best not to push. Give him the rest of the week off.

Write three more poems on the other seasons, following suggestions in 1-B, p. 44.

Week 12. I am using poetry as a means of opening up your child's perception of experience. This short section by no means exhausts the subject; it only offers a glimmer of what poetry is about. If your child is interested in writing more poems, you may want to read *Wishes, Lies and Dreams*, by Kenneth Koch. The book is out of print, but your local library may have a copy or be willing to order one for you through inter-library loan. Mr. Koch offers ideas, subjects and patterns for children in all grade levels. A companion volume, *Rose, Where'd You Get That Red?* explores methods of teaching poetry as literature and as self-expression.

Monday

Read season poems out loud and comment positively on any details you especially like. Then go over each line and check for weak spots. Pay special attention, once again, to *nouns* and *verbs*; are they sharp and concrete? Are all the senses included?

Read over your season poems and change any lines you believe could be better. Make neat copies of two of them. Read 1-C on p. 44 and write a color poem.

Tuesday

Writing about a color is an exercise in abstract concepts. Some literal-minded children may have a little trouble with this (after all, colors can't be smelled or heard), but the example given should fire up imaginations. Every student should write at least one color poem. If that one turned out reasonably well, ask him to pick a color that seems totally opposite and write a contrasting poem.

Write another poem about a color.

Wednesday

Discuss and revise color poems, remembering to look for strong sensory impressions. You may choose to make a construction paper frame for each poem and display them around the house.

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Copy your color poems. Then read all the poems on pp. 88-89. Choose the poem you like best.

Thursday

Talk over the sample poetry and analyze the poem your child selected: How are the senses involved? What words are repeated? Can you see a structure or pattern? What is it? Exposure to these various forms may start creative juices flowing.

A word about rhyme here--I love rhyming poetry, but I'm convinced that few young people have the skill or vocabulary to fully express their feelings in rhyme. Some of my students have argued with me over this, but none have changed my mind. By all means, let your child experiment with rhyme if he wants to, but since the purpose of these assignments is to explore sensory impressions, insist on free verse this once.

Exercise 1-D, p. 44: Write a poem on anything that can be experienced easily through at least four of the senses. You may use any form or pattern, but don't try to make it rhyme.

WEEK 13. Some children (and some adults) take to figures of speech like a duck to water (to use a cliché). Others don't get along with them at all, and their writing will not necessarily suffer from it. But a dash of simile or metaphor adds spice to prose, so even if you think your student doesn't care for this sort of word play, at least give it a try.

Monday

Discuss the poem written last week. From this distance of three or four days, is there anything he would change? Are the sensory images sharp and clear?

Revise poem and make a neat copy. Read p. 45.

Tuesday

Discuss the difference between **literal** images and **figurative** images. Does he understand what an "image" is? Do you?

Read aloud the list of unfinished similes in 2-A; you'll find the clichés coming almost without effort. Before turning the student loose on this exercise, brainstorm together on some fresh comparisons for light and heavy: "Light as paper," "Heavy as a poundcake," "Light as the brain matter of a blonde," etc. (Sorry, blondes. You know we make these jokes only because we're jealous.)

Finish #1-10 in the simile exercise, pp. 45-46.

Wednesday

Complete the simile exercise, p. 46.

I'm allowing some extra time for Exercise 2-A because similes are not easy for most. This evening at dinner, ask some other family members for apt comparisons. It could be the beginning of a nutty family tradition.

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Thursday

Read p. 46 and write a metaphor poem on one of the abstract concepts listed in 2-B.

WEEK 14

Monday

Take a few moments to discuss what a metaphor is, reviewing the section about metaphor on p. 46. Many young people enjoy writing metaphor poems; did yours? Which does he feel more comfortable with, simile or metaphor? Why?

Write another metaphor poem, choosing another of the qualities listed in 2-B, p. 46.

Tuesday

Read p. 47 and complete 2-C.

Wednesday-Thursday

Write two poems imagining yourself as a personified object (pp. 47-48, 2-D).

WEEK 15. This week the "real" assignments begin. You will notice a pattern in most of the following divisions: an introduction, with practice exercises, at least one assignment in which the student writes from his own experience, revision, and a final assignment requiring the student to transfer his experience to an imaginary situation. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, will be to oversee progress, help with revision, and remind your child of any principles he has forgotten.

Most of the following divisions will include a considerable amount to reading. Some students, especially those already inclined toward literature and literary pursuits, will catch on quickly; others may benefit from talking it over with you. Use your judgment as to whether your child can both understand *and* apply the following material on his own. If you're not sure you may wish to go through Section 3 with him to see how he does.

Monday

Read and re-read pp. 48-49. Then fill out the chart on p. 49.

Tuesday

Any of these details could be on the chart:

Sound--roar of traffic, squeaky chair, "whoosh" of curtains, hum of projectors
Smell--diesel fumes, buttered popcorn, cigarette smoke
Taste--popcorn, diesel fumes
Touch (texture)--velvet upholstery, crunch of popcorn

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Sight--concrete, skyscrapers, mirrors, gilt, carved wood, domed ceiling, wide screen, etc.

Read pp. 49-50, choose a place to describe, and complete the chart under 3-B, p. 51.

Wednesday

Look over the chart on p. 51 and discuss with your child anything he should add. If you're familiar with the place he chooses to describe, you may think of something he forgot, but don't insist that he include all your suggestions--what impresses you about the place may have little meaning for him. On the other hand, don't let him sit idly by while you fill up the chart. If he "just can't think of anything," ask him to imagine himself in the place. It may even be possible to send him there with a notebook and pencil. Don't allow yourself to be stonewalled! All we are asking him to do is write down some perceptions of a place. We all have *thousands* of perceptions; the problem is sorting them out. The chart is a tool to help the writer think about and arrange the details that bombard his senses every day.

Once the chart is completed, he has some material to work with. This assignment should write itself! You may wish to go over the guidelines with your student before he begins.

Read guidelines under ASSIGNMENT 3-A, p. 51 and write a description, one to two double-spaced pages long. Proofread and make corrections.

Thursday

We'll spend some time on revision next week. All you should do today is make sure the student has completed the assignment. If you have a chance this weekend, make a copy of the assignment for comparison later. Be advised that pencil does not photocopy well--go over the assignment in black ink for best results. You may wish to make a copy of a first draft periodically, as it is sometimes instructive to gauge improvements between the first try and the finished product.

WEEK 16. It's important that a writer learns to proofread, evaluate and correct his own work. In my opinion, many "professionals" never learned to do this properly in their youth, and their work shows it. This week the student will begin learning what revision is and how to revise.

Monday

Read pp. 52-53 down to ASSIGNMENT 3-B. Then revise your description according to "Revision Checklist #1, p. 86.

Tuesday

Now it's your turn. If the description at this point looks like a mess, that's promising. You should see words crossed out and notes scribbled in the margins and between the lines. If you don't, it means that the writer could find nothing to correct, which in turn means that he hasn't learned to evaluate or that he's just too good. We'll rule out the latter for now.

It's always best to start with the positives. Read the description and tell your child what you like about it: word choices, details, organization. Then look carefully for weak spots.

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Review the assignment guidelines on p. 51 and be sure that all are included. Then turn to Revision Checklist #1 on p. 86 and read the description once for each item listed. This is tedious work, but as a young writer trains himself to look for these things, it becomes automatic. You may decide to take turns: you read through watching for word choices, while your child checks sentence structure. When you find a place that seems to need correction, discuss it first, then write the agreed-upon changes between the lines.

Careful judgment is important here; keep in mind that you don't have to correct everything on the first assignment. If the revision goes on too long your sensitive artist will develop a persecution mindset and start making observations like, "You never like *anything* I do," or "I'm gonna have to rewrite the whole thing." Nobody likes to see his work taken apart before his eyes, so tread gently. Concentrate on **content** first--if the description doesn't contain many details at all or doesn't convey a sense of emotional involvement, work on that. If content is not a problem, compliment the student on his evocative details and ask if sentences might be improved. **Don't try to fix it all.** Remember this book contains many more assignments and many more revisions.

Make a final copy of the description you revised yesterday, proofread, and make any necessary corrections.

Tell your child he's getting off easy: most writers don't settle for just one revision. Tolstoy revised *War and Peace* at least seven times!

Wednesday

Proofread the final copy and mark any **minor** corrections that should be made. Be sure to compliment the improvements and be specific about the details you especially like. "Good job" is not enough. If you were able to make a photocopy of the original draft, this would be a good time to compare the two and let your child see for himself how the revision improved his work. Keep both copies in his creative writing binder. You may wish to attach a snapshot or drawing of the special place.

Read Assignment 3-B on p. 53 and rewrite your place description.

Thursday

Rewriting assignments gives the student a hint of the process of composition, the shifting of an idea and how that shift can be communicated with words. How well did he communicate an atmosphere of suspense in the rewrite? Compare with Example #9 on p. 90 and make some suggestions of your own.

Read Assignment 3-C on p. 53 and make another chart listing details of the place you choose to describe. Write a first draft, using guidelines on p. 51. Do not use the words "I see," "I hear," "I feel," etc.

WEEK 17. Now we can begin to move a little faster. This week the student will complete one assignment and begin another, ideally with less help from you. Your writer may still need some guidance and encouragement, so be available. (You may wish to scout around for some pictures of interesting places to use later in the week.)

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Monday

Review Revision Checklist #1 (p. 86) and read your description, marking any improvements you may need to make. Then go through your paper one sentence at a time and thoughtfully make those corrections.

Tuesday

Ask your child to read the description to you and then help you analyze it. Check to make sure that all guidelines are included. (Declaring "I feel" off limits may prove difficult for some students, but they must learn that English affords all kinds of ways to get meaning across. "This place wraps me in peace," or "The old excitement tingles in my fingers" are just as meaningful, and actually more effective, than "I feel peaceful (or excited).") When you both are satisfied, or exhausted, with the revision--stop.

Make a neat copy of description #2 and keep it.

Wednesday

Read the paragraph titled "Just Imagine" on p. 53. Find a picture (if you decide to use one), make the chart, and begin writing a one-page description.

Thursday

Finish the description you started yesterday and proofread.

WEEK 18. The "Just Imagine" assignments are given to help two basic student types: those who don't think they have any imagination and those who have plenty but don't know what to do with it. *Everybody* has imagination. Most of us (myself included) find it difficult to dream up stories on demand, but that's not what imagination means. Being able to recall feelings, thoughts and sensations of the past and recreate them on paper is an imaginative act. The purpose of the Just Imagine assignments is to show the hesitant student how he can project those same feelings, sensations and thought into a place he's never been.

Some children, on the other hand, have been writing about imaginary places for years--maybe even living in them. *They* need to learn that even the wildest flights of fancy must be grounded in concrete, sensory detail in order to come alive for the reader.

Monday

Revise your description of an imaginary place according to Revision Checklist #1.

Tuesday

Read the revised description. Praise the details that impress you and try to find at least one spot where more detail would be helpful. Be sure that the student has included some indication of how this place makes him feel.

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Make a final copy of your description. If you used a picture, keep it with your description in the binder. Then read the top of p. 54 and follow the directions in the "Try It" paragraph.

Wednesday

The "framed" description will not be a masterpiece but it should be focused--a simple "study" of one or two objects seen through a picture frame. The student will be learning to narrow his field of vision while writing.

Write a "self portrait" according to ASSIGNMENT 4-A on p. 54.

Thursday

Read the description your child wrote of himself. (Incidentally, I've found that girls tend to be critical of the way they look, while boys are either positive or non-committal!) In this type of exercise it's very easy to bog down in details, which, though they are important, are secondary to the overall expression of the face. A writer must learn to include only those details which support his main theme or themes. Check how the supporting details really *support*. What is it in this face that shows confidence, or hope, or friendliness? The two of you may want to get out a mirror and take a look at *your* (the teacher's) face, define the overall expression, and decide what features contribute most to that expression. You may discover that eyes, eyebrows and mouth are the most expressive part of the face.

Make any revisions necessary in your "self-portrait" and copy it neatly. Then read Assignment 4-B, pp. 55-56 and decide what TV personality you will describe. Observe this person over the weekend and make a guidesheet answering the questions on p. 56.

WEEK 19

Monday

Review guidelines and example on p. 56 and write a one-page description of a "public" person. Proofread.

Tuesday

Reread your paragraph, think about it, and revise according to Checklist #1. Then make a neat copy.

Wednesday

Did you catch that? The writer is revising without your input. This is worth trying to see what he can do on his own. Read the paragraph once it's in the final draft and be sure to compliment on at least one specific detail. Keep the negatives, if you spot them, to yourself. From now on, the decision to see draft copies before they are revised is up to you, based on how much supervision you judge your child needs. For each assignment, I will explain what I believe are the most important principles to grasp.

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Read ASSIGNMENT 4-C, p. 57, carefully and rewrite your description of the TV personality.

Thursday

Read pp. 57-58 at least twice. Choose a subject, for ASSIGNMENT 4-D, start watching, and decide what your subject will be doing in your description of him or her. You don't have to write the paragraph today, but make a guidesheet answering the questions on p. 56.

WEEK 20

Monday

Write a draft copy of your description, double-spaced, using information from your guidesheet.

Tuesday

If possible, have someone read your description as suggested on p. 58. Then revise and write a final draft.

Wednesday

Read Assignment 4-E on p. 59, choose another subject and write a first draft.

Thursday

Revise Assignment 4-E according to Revision Checklist #1.

WEEK 21

Monday

Read the "Just Imagine" paragraph on p. 59 and make a guidesheet of details that describe your ideal friend.

Tuesday

Write a draft description of your ideal friend. remember to show what this person is like by what he or she does.

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Wednesday

"Show, don't tell" is a creative writer's maxim. It's okay, in the description, to say, "Jack is very self-confident," but the writer should also show Jack's confidence by what he says, how he walks, what he does, etc. If you don't see this in the description, discuss ways to show the character's personality.

Revise your description, then ask someone to read it and tell you if it sounds like a real person.

Thursday

Read p. 59 and write a paragraph telling how to make a sandwich.

WEEK 22. Narrative is basic to creative writing. It's often what we think of as "story telling," although, as I will point out later, a narrative is not necessarily a story. When we ask for a field trip report or a "What I Did at Grandma's" paper we are asking for narrative, at least in part.

Monday

Just for fun, you may want to try making the sandwich he described (if someone can be induced to eat it). Or ask a younger sibling to make it. Are the directions easy to follow? Most important, are all the steps in order? If the student has trouble coming up with alternatives for the word "then," point out that the two suggestions given are prepositional phrases. Look at the list of prepositions on p. 17 and try to find one or two that might fill the bill.

Read Assignment 5-A, p. 60, and list the steps of a job that you do regularly.

Tuesday

Write a complete description of the job (at least one double-spaced page), then read over it carefully to make sure you included everything.

Wednesday

This could be interesting. If you have time, why not write a description of one of *your* chores, then be ready to switch jobs with your child for a day. Or, if you have two writing students, give them the same assignment and ask them to exchange with each other. Whoever takes on the task must complete it following the written instructions *only*.

Read the "Just Imagine" paragraph on p. 60. Think of an imaginary job you could describe and start researching it.

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Thursday

The "Just Imagine" assignment would dovetail neatly with science or history. If you are studying the space program, ask for (or assign) a description of a job on the shuttle or on the (as yet) imaginary U.S. space station. A student could imagine himself in the future doing any kind of job associated with oceanography, electronics, wildlife control, etc. Or he may be more inclined to imagine himself in the past, firing a steam locomotive, spinning wool, or grinding corn. The student's inclination should be considered--he may want to make up a job entirely out of his head. Whatever you choose to do, stress two requirements: 1) realistic explanation with several concrete details is a must, and 2) the student must stick to one chore, not try to outline a whole career. If this turns into a big project that requires a lot of research, allow more time.

Continue research on the "Just Imagine" assignment.

WEEK 23

Monday

List the sequence of steps required to complete the job you chose to describe.

Tuesday

Reread the "Just Imagine" paragraph on p. 60 and write a draft of your imaginary job description. Proofread.

Wednesday

Read the description and ask about anything that seems unclear to you. Pay special attention to sequence and determine if any intermediate "steps" are needed. Remember, even though this is an imaginary job, it should still make sense! If the paper does not include any description or sense of place, ask for some sensory details, or collaborate on slipping in a few. For example:

After I slip the whatzit off the whozat and loosen the screws,
I have to step back quickly or get scalded by steam gushing
out of the crater.

Revise assignment according to checklist #1.

Thursday

Copy your description neatly--and draw a picture to go with it, if you like.

WEEK 24. More on the importance of detail this week. The examples on p. 61 should demonstrate how detail makes all the difference between merely serviceable writing, and vivid, memorable writing.

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Monday

Read p. 61 and write a first draft of Assignment 5-B.

Tuesday

Revise yesterday's assignment according to Checklist #1.

This assignment asks the student to recount an ordinary occurrence, dredging from memory. The resulting story should be a little vignette, a snapshot of family life. Watch again for detail. This is the first time I have asked for a quote, and it won't be the last. Direct quotes are one of the easiest ways to add freshness and immediacy to a narrative.

Wednesday

Read pp. 62-63 and follow directions in the "Try It" paragraph.

Thursday

The subject of focusing is so important it's worth reviewing with your student. If there's any confusion about the difference between paragraphs 1 and 2 on pp. 62-63, emphasize the point that paragraph #2 concentrated on just a few minutes out of an entire eventful day. We've structured sentences, now we're structuring entire assignments, centering the action.

Remember the "What I Did Last Summer" composition--the one that probably bored you both to tears while you were working through Part One? I'm not a gambler but I would lay almost any odds that the the piece was boring because it was too general.

So choosing an incident to write about is extremely important. It would be wise to discuss the incident with your student to make sure that it can be adequately told, with plenty of supporting detail, in two or three double-spaced pages.

Decide on a subject for Assignment 6-A, p. 64. Be sure to limit yourself to one incident, and make a guidesheet answering all the questions.

WEEK 25

Monday

Write the first draft of Assignment 6-A and proof-read, checking to make sure that all guidelines are included.

Tuesday

Read the paper aloud to yourself or someone who shared the experience with you. Consider any suggestions or add any details that you may have left out.

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Wednesday

Read "How to Revise" (p. 85), then revise your narrative according to **Revision Checklist #2**.

Because this is the first full-blown narrative writing assignment in the book, you should take part in the revision. Whether you decide to read the narrative alone and write comments in the margins or to go over it with your student, the main thing to look for is overall structure. The incident described must be complete and fully explained, with no gaps and plenty of supporting detail. It's quite common for a young writer to choose too broad a topic, start out like gangbusters, reach the end of the second page and realize that he's not even halfway through. So he uses the last paragraph to win the game, finish out the season *and* receive the Most Valuable Player trophy at the Sports Banquet. His narrative will seem unbalanced, to say the least. If this is a problem, encourage the student to *focus in*. Instead of covering a whole tournament, concentrate on one decisive play in one pivotal game. Rather than "The Day We Went to the County Fair," tell about "The Scariest Ride of My Life." It's well worth the trouble to break the habit of generalizing. If a student can move from the vague and general to the specific and concrete, his writing will improve at least 100%.

Thursday

Read your narrative one last time, make any final changes, and copy neatly.

WEEK 26. The student should write another narrative, along the same schedule as last week's assignment:

Monday. Decide topic and make guidesheet.

Tuesday. Write first draft.

Wednesday. First revision.

Thursday. Final revision and re-copy. (Or save copy work for Friday.)

WEEK 27. I've given so many suggestions in the "Just Imagine" paragraph on p. 65, it may be difficult for the student to choose just one--let him write two! If you feel your child is mature or confident enough by now to follow through on his own work, just assign a narrative to be finished by the end of the week and let him pace himself. If he still needs a little guidance, break down the assignment into increments similar to last week's schedule.

WEEK 28. Dialogue is sustained conversation, as opposed to a single quote or two. The section on dialogue is intended to help a student **listen** first of all, then **reproduce** what he hears. In addition, he will be required to **edit** what he writes, choosing the most important, telling, or characteristic words or phrases.

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Monday

Read pp. 65-66 carefully, then write a conversation as directed in the "Try It" paragraph on p. 66. Revise the conversation according to "Try It Again," p. 67.

Tuesday

Read pp. 68-69. Decide on whom you would like to interview, choose a topic to discuss, make an appointment with him or her and write a list of questions to ask.

Wednesday-Friday

Interview your subject, make a guidesheet answering the questions on p. 69, and write a draft of the interview.

The student should plan to interview someone he can talk to this week, say Wednesday or Thursday. Go over his list of questions with him to make sure that they cover the topic adequately.

If possible, the student should write his first draft the same day as the interview. Check the guidesheet before he begins to make sure all questions are answered.

If you read the draft copy, ask yourself these questions about the student's work: Is "interviewee's" speech reproduced accurately (does it sound like this particular man or woman talking)? Are nonessential or peripheral comments edited out? Are supporting details and actions included? The interview should stick to one topic, and cover it fully.

WEEK 29. Either or both of the imaginative assignments of the next two weeks will fit with any history topic you happen to be studying. The student will have to use solid historical fact as well as imagination to be plausible. Science topics lend themselves to these forms all your student could "interview" a great scientist, or an amoeba, or write an exciting radio drama called "Attack of the Killer Virus."

Monday

Read the "Just Imagine" paragraph on p. 70. Decide whom you would like to interview and write a list of 4-5 questions to ask him or her.

Tuesday

Research your chosen character and write answers to the guidesheet on p. 69.

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Wednesday

Write a first draft of your interview.

Thursday

Revise your interview and make a neat copy.

WEEK 30

Monday

Read the imaginative interview with an eye to vividness of detail and sympathy with the character. Does your student seem to understand this person? If not, discuss what might have made him or her "tick," and how those motivations might be brought out in the interview.

Read pp. 70-71 and choose a narrative from which to write a radio play.

Tuesday

I included the narratives on p. 71 to give the student a variety of material to work with, if you decide not to integrate the writing with science or history. Certainly the Bible is full of fascinating narratives to dramatize, and writing and taping "radio" plays could be a fun Sunday School project.

Wednesday-Thursday

Revise your radio play and make a neat, legible copy.
Get a few friends and record it!

WEEK 31. Changing point of view is often a liberating experience for your writers. It's also mind-stretching and fun. You might want to try it yourself!

Monday

Read p. 72 through the "Try It" paragraph; write a short description entitled "I Am A Pencil."

Tuesday

Read through the "Try It Again" paragraph on p. 73 and rewrite conversation as directed.

Wednesday-Thursday

Read "Assignment 8", p. 73 and write the first draft of a rewritten narrative.

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WEEK 32

Monday

Write a final draft of your rewritten narrative.

Tuesday

Read the "Just Imagine " paragraph on p. 74, Decide on a scene to narrate, and write a draft from point of view #1.

Wednesday

Write draft from point of view #2.

Thursday

Revise both scenes and make a final copy.

WEEK 33. I don't consider short story writing to be the epitome of all literary endeavors, but the concluding section of *Wordsmith* is a fitting climax to this book. Virtually all the techniques and principles of effective writing that we've studied thus far must be employed in a good short story, plus the invaluable discipline of **structuring**. The student should understand that he's about to embark on a big project which could take anywhere from two to four weeks.

Monday

Read pp. 75-77.

Tuesday

Reread pp. 75-77 and follow directions in the "Try It" paragraph on 77.

Wednesday

Discuss the work the student did yesterday--would the news article, as he structured it, make a good story? Collaborate on adding a few made-up facts to make the story more interesting, and discuss what the people involved might be like. Together you might develop fascinating fiction out of a bare-bones news article.

Read pp. 77 through the top half of p. 78 and fill in the story structure outline on p. 78.

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Thursday

Read p. 79, decide on a subject for your story and write an outline.

WEEK 34. This week the student will write a story on the subject he chose last week. Before he gets seriously into it, you should take a few minutes to discuss the story and how he plans to tell it. Look at his outline and try to estimate how many pages will be required to cover the material. It's best to encourage a short short story for the first effort--embarking on a ten-page epic may prove to be discouraging for novices who find they've bitten off more than they can chew. But if the student has his heart set on the story he wants to tell, let him tell it, even if it runs to twenty pages.

Monday

Read p. 80; write an opening sentence.

Tuesday-Friday

Read pp. 81-82 and write the first draft of your story.

WEEK 35. The revising schedule is up to you. Depending on length, a story could profit from three or four revisions, but by that time, of course, the paper is so marked up it's almost impossible to read. The ideal solution is putting the story on a word processor and running off a fresh copy for each revision. I would insist on two revisions for this first effort, with a few days between them.

WEEK 36. The student can make a final copy early in the week and rejoice in a job well done. Many children are delighted to find that they can do this and, while they may not be ready to jump into their next story right away, they will be receptive to writing another one "sometime." Perhaps, depending on your schedule, you will have time to do that before school's out. At least, he's written an entire story--future writing assignments should be much less intimidating, and some of them may even be fun.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

You're not through with this book yet! The guidelines and steps your child used to complete the assignments in Part Three will work for many creative writing assignments in the future. Here are some ideas for next year's projects:

Describing a Place: Describe a special vacation spot you visited last summer; write an advertisement for a resort area (whether you've been there or not); write a newspaper article modeled on a piece in the travel section of the Sunday paper; imagine and describe a medieval monastery, a space shuttle interior, Independence Hall, El Dorado, Heaven, etc.

Describing a Person: Describe a close friend at a special moment; write a "family portrait" of everyone around the Thanksgiving table or Christmas tree; determine the character of a celebrity or world leader from his or her photo and write a description.

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Narrative: Write about The Time I Laughed The Hardest, The Happiest Day of My Life, The Time I Felt Sorry For My Mom (Dad, Sister, etc.), How to Play My Favorite Game (real or imagined); write a narrative about a news story as though you were present; write "I Was There When . . ." stories about famous historical events.

Dialogue: Plays are the thing! Write radio dramas, "readers' theater" stories, educational dialogues. Choose narratives from the Bible, children's literature, even textbooks.

Point of View: For a book report, describe the climax of the book from the POV of one of the characters. Imagine an issue or a news story from the POV of two people taking opposite sides. Record historic scenes from the POV of two participants (narrative). Write a conversation between a "pro" and a "con" (dialogue).

Story: More true-life events: An Experience that Taught Me An Important Lesson; The Fear I Faced Down; How the Lord Answered My Prayer, etc. The student can branch out from non-fictional to fictional stories, often just by drawing from an actual event and changing the setting to another place and time. People have been learning the same basic lessons for ages, and will still need to learn them in space colonies or biospheres.

WRITING ALL OVER THE CURRICULUM

Keep in mind that creative writing is not necessarily an end in itself. It can also form a bridge between the student and practically any area of objective knowledge you wish to teach. Whether studying history, geography, Bible, or the fine arts, creative writing can become an effective learning tool, for these reasons:

- a) It allows the students to become personally involved with the subject by writing about it in a personal way. If they don't care for the subject, an imaginative writing assignment could throw a new light on it. On the other hand, if they like the *subject*, but don't care for *writing*, it would give them an opportunity to practice valuable writing skills on friendly turf.
- b) It encourages students to view subjects in creative ways and from refreshing perspectives.
- c) It forces them to think, because a creative writing assignment comes mostly from the heart, not from an encyclopedia or textbook.

Such assignments can easily be overdone for students who are not avid writers, and straightforward expository writing should never be neglected. But occasionally, as your judgment directs, try out some of these ideas for enlivening the curriculum.

HISTORY is the subject that lends itself most readily to creative writing assignments; the enduring popularity of historical novels attests to that. *Wordsmith* suggests "interviewing" historical figures as part of the dialogue section. Further excursions into "creative" history:

1. The newspaper. Appoint an editor and ask him or her to assign articles, first-person accounts, interviews, even drawings and poems to other members of the family or class. A newspaper could be "published" for each unit or chapter studied, and be sure to make extra copies for friends, relatives and posterity.
2. Take a time machine journey into a specific time and place. Write this as a narrative, focusing on one or two events, and record conversations and impressions. Note the aspects of life that would be most difficult for you to adjust to.
3. Rewrite an important historical document (i.e., the Declaration of Independence, Washington's Farewell, the Gettysburg Address) in your own words.

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4. Write a dialogue or short debate between two historical characters with opposing points of view. They do not have to have lived at the same time.
5. Write a definition of an abstract word (such as "patriotism," "tolerance," "dissent," etc.) in terms of a historical character who illustrated it. See *Wordsmith* p. 46 for an example.
6. Write a short story with setting, rising action, climax and conclusion, inspired by a historical photograph or painting.

In BIBLE, creative writing may be used to help a student personalize God's Word. When a student writes himself into a biblical narrative ("I was there when . . ."), he must think about the real conditions, the motives of the participants, and the impressions they received. Beyond the simple narrative assignment, you may wish to try:

1. A personal Psalm. Psalms are not difficult to write, thanks to the distinguishing mark of Hebrew poetry: parallelism. Parallelism is simply saying the same thing in two different ways. Find some scriptural examples, then write a praise, thanksgiving or supplicatory Psalm based upon the style. Be specific about what you are asking or praising God *for*.
2. We can assess many people in the Bible because the writers have shown us what they did. Using the guidelines on *Wordsmith* p. 56, describe a scene from the early life of a biblical character, then write a similar description of the same person many years later, showing how he or she has changed.
3. When Jesus told parables he used everyday objects to illustrate a point. Rewrite a parable in a modern setting. Of course, all the elements will be different, but the point of the story must remain the same.
4. Write a "Dear Paul" letter based on your personal reaction to one of the shorter epistles. Imagine that the letter was written to you and tell how you responded to it. Letters written to individuals such as Titus or Philemon may be good for starters, then go on to a more general epistle such as Ephesians or Philippians.
5. Write a "Whatever happened to . . ." story imagining the trials and triumphs of a minor character in the New Testament. How did the life of the woman at the well change after she met Jesus? What happened to the man born blind? Focus on a specific (imagined) incident and follow the guidelines for short story.
6. After reading all or part of *Pilgrim's Progress*, write a "chapter" describing a stage on your own spiritual journey.

SCIENCE can be enhanced with an occasional excursion into imaginative writing. Science and imagination are not as unrelated as they may seem at first; a little dreaming is involved in every great discovery. Creative writing can help a student visualize basic concepts, but remember that even the wildest flights of fancy must be based on solid scientific fact.

1. For a group project, write a serial story about a hero who foils the bad guys by discovering the scientific principle behind their dastardly scheme. Hold a brainstorming session to develop a plot around a predetermined principle, then assign a section of the story to each participant. This is not as difficult as it may sound if everybody works together.
2. Keep a journal recording a famous experiment, in the "person" of the scientist who originally conducted the experiment. Isaac Newton's investigations with light, Michael

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Farraday's discovery of alternating current, or Galileo's observations with his telescope are all reasonably easy to duplicate. Check your local library for ideas.

3. Write a radio play depicting one of the many processes of the human body: a trip through the circulatory system, attack of the killer virus, an escape from a speeding softball, etc.
4. Science fiction stories are a challenge, but some youngsters are up to it. In true science fiction (as opposed to fantasy) the story should be built upon scientific conjecture fitted into a "what if" scenario. Try developing a plot based upon a recent discovery in physics or chemistry. If the plotline sounds promising, write it up!

ART is the medium for training visual perception. The purpose of studying art is learning to see through other eyes, and having one's own depth of "vision" enlarged. Students can be encouraged to really think about what they see in a work of art if they are expected to write about it.

1. Landscapes

- a) Pretend you are a visitor to this country and have just hiked to the scene. Describe your emotions. Then, describe the same scene as though you were a native hired to carry the tourist's camping gear.
- b) Describe the landscape as though it were the opening paragraph of a suspense novel. Now, write another description of the same scene as though it were the opening paragraph of a comic, or romance, or adventure novel.

2. Historical or genre painting

- a) Write a dialogue between the figures represented in the painting. If these are historical characters, incorporate what you know of their personalities and beliefs.
- b) Describe the thoughts of a single figure in the painting.
- c) Describe the same scene from the opposing points of view of two figures.

3. Portraits

- a) Study two or three portraits of people you know nothing about and write a description of each, guessing what their personalities must be like. If possible, find out more about these people and see how close you were.
- b) Write an imaginary dialogue between two people portrayed in very different portraits, e.g., John Singer Sargent's *Madame X* and Thomas Eakin's *Addie*.
- c) Find out everything you can about the artist and the subject, then write a short narrative describing how the subject arrived in the artist's studio for his or her sitting, and how he or she behaved.

4. Abstract or modern art (if you care to take it on)

Write a poem based on an abstract work. You may use the "sensory poem" model in *Wordsmith* p. 39 (describing what the piece would sound, smell or taste like), or any other pattern to express how the work makes you feel. You don't have to be serious!

MUSIC allows us the opportunity to learn to listen. The only way to teach our children to appreciate great music is to make sure they listen to it, but just playing tapes to a captive audience does not necessarily insure appreciation. Give them something to listen *for*.

1. Many classical works utilize a musical theme, which is repeated, with variations, throughout. Listen to a piece enough to determine what the theme is and how it is varied. Then, write words that can be sung to that music. These "lyrics" will take little effort, since most themes are not long, but once the words are in your head, it will be hard to forget the music.

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2. "Program music" describes a particular incident or scene, such as Beethoven's 6th Symphony, which depicts a visit to the countryside. As the music is playing, write descriptions of the scenes that are portrayed, using the techniques for writing description in *Wordsmith*. Dynamics and key changes will suggest certain moods which should be evident in the description. The teacher may or may not reveal beforehand what the music is *supposed* to suggest. Some popular program pieces: "The Moldau" (Smetana), "Carnival of Animals" (Saint-Saens), "Pictures at an Exhibition" (Moussorsky), and "The Four Seasons" (Vivaldi).

3. Try writing a short story based on a symphony. Each movement should suggest a twist in the plot, with the last movement (usually the most dramatic) as the climax. The "story" will be dashed off quickly while the student is listening to the piece for the first time, and may not amount to much. Listen again and develop the work a little further.

4. For a family or class project, write a radio play based on an especially dramatic piece, such as Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" or Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries." Try recording it with the music as a background mood-setter. The results may appear little more than an exercise in silliness to you, but at least the students will become very familiar with the piece.

GETTING INTO PRINT

Periodicals which publish writings by children are often underfunded and short-lived, but there are a few established mastheads. If your child has written a poem, story, essay or description that you're especially proud of, why not submit it to a magazine? You'll only be out a little postage and some time. For more ideas, consult a current copy of *The Writers Market* (many libraries have one at the reference desk) and check the listings under "Children" and "Juvenile."

It's wise to write the publication first and ask for guidelines. Most editors print a handout explaining the kind of material they're looking for and the format they prefer. This could save you some of that time and postage.

1. *Creative Kids*

P. O. Box 6448, Mobile, AL 36660

For "gifted" students ages 5-18. Poetry, stories, plays, book and game reviews, etc.

2. *Stone Soup*

P. O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063

For ages 6-13. Non-fiction and "contemporary problem" stories, essays, book reviews.

3. *Grit*

208 W. 3rd St., Williamsport, PA 17701

All ages, "Kids' Page." 100 word short stories, 12-line poems. Older children are invited to write about an unusual person.

4. *Cricket*

P. O. Box 300, Peru, IL 61354

Monthly contests--check the "Cricket League" section of the magazine, which should be available at your public library.

5. *Guideposts*

747 3rd Ave., New York, NY 10017

The annual Young Writer's Competition awards big prizes and draws a huge response. A good incentive for high schoolers.

6. *The Bonding Place*

P. O. Box 640, Titusville, FL 32781-0640

An annual essay contest for homeschoolers. Narrative, fiction, drama and poetry all accepted. Write for current theme and guidelines.